AAAS

ADVANCING SCIENCE, SERVING SOCIETY

Alan I. Leshner
Chief Executive Officer and
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June 1, 2011

Board of Directors
Los Alamitos Unified School District
10293 Bloomfield Street
Los Alamitos CA 90730-2264

Dear Members of the Board:

We are writing to express our concern that the Environmental Science AP class will need to comply with the newly-revised "controversial issue" policy. Although debate about policy options exists, climate change is not a scientifically-controversial topic. In addition to countless scientific peer-reviewed papers and assessments by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the leaders of 18 premier scientific societies wrote the attached letter to Members of Congress on the state of climate science.

Global warming principles have been subjected to scientific scrutiny, tested and retested for decades, and their merits have been reinforced. Contrary assertions are inconsistent with an objective assessment of the vast body of peer-reviewed science. Observations throughout the world make it clear that climate change is occurring, and rigorous scientific research demonstrates that the greenhouse gases emitted by human activities are the primary driver. These conclusions are based on multiple independent lines of evidence.

As the students of Los Alamitos graduate and enter the global workforce, a sound understanding of science and technology will be critical to their ability to compete for high-skill jobs in an increasingly high-tech world economy. Asserting that there are scientific controversies about these concepts among researchers – when in fact there are not - will only confuse students, not enlighten them.

We encourage you to support a rigorous scientific education program by removing this class from the "controversial issues" policy and requirements.

Sincerely,

Alan I. Leshner

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American Association for the Advancement of Science

American Chemical Society

American Geophysical Union

American Institute of Biological Sciences

American Meteorological Society

American Society of Agronomy

American Society of Plant Biologists

American Statistical Association

Association of Ecosystem Research Centers

Botanical Society of America

Crop Science Society of America

Ecological Society of America

Natural Science Collections Alliance

Organization of Biological Field Stations

Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics

Society of Systematic Biologists

Soil Science Society of America

University Corporation for Atmospheric Research

Dear Senator:

As you consider climate change legislation, we, as leaders of scientific organizations, write to state the consensus scientific view.

Observations throughout the world make it clear that climate change is occurring, and rigorous scientific research demonstrates that the greenhouse gases emitted by human activities are the primary driver. These conclusions are based on multiple independent lines of evidence, and contrary assertions are inconsistent with an objective assessment of the vast body of peer-reviewed science. Moreover, there is strong evidence that ongoing climate change will have broad impacts on society, including the global economy and on the environment. For the United States, climate change impacts include sea level rise for coastal states, greater threats of extreme weather events, and increased risk of regional water scarcity, urban heat waves, western wildfires, and the disturbance of biological systems throughout the country. The severity of climate change impacts is expected to increase substantially in the coming decades.[1]

If we are to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change, emissions of greenhouse gases must be dramatically reduced. In addition, adaptation will be necessary to address those impacts that are already unavoidable. Adaptation efforts include improved infrastructure design, more sustainable management of water and other natural resources, modified agricultural practices, and improved emergency responses to storms, floods, fires and heat waves.

We in the scientific community offer our assistance to inform your deliberations as you seek to address the impacts of climate change.

[1] The conclusions in this paragraph reflect the scientific consensus represented by, for example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and U.S. Global Change Research Program. Many scientific societies have endorsed these findings in their own statements, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Chemical Society, American Geophysical Union, American Meteorological Society, and American Statistical Association.

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